TRIANGLE SINCLAIR USERS' GROUP

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M c/o Doug Dewey, 206 James St., Carrboro, NC 27510
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FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The 2nd week of November marks the first anniversary of the organization of the Triangle Sinclair Users' Group--a users' group open to all who are interested in the Timex-Sinclair family of computers. TSUG is the users' group with a host of differences. It saves you money; you don't even have to pay to belong and to benefit. It is federally approved as a non-profit organization in its' own right; you may make tax exempt gifts and donations to TSUG. It publishes a nationally recognized newsletter--done mainly on the Timex-Sinclair computer--which the interested public is welcome to receive; the newsletter is a lengthy compendium of information, hints, programs (some 16 K in length!), special offers, etc. but the print quality has varied from "okay" to "just terrible." (We hope to solve this problem soon; it has been our only source of criticism.) It draws people from many walks of life and from all areas of North Carolina and the Nation; our newsletter does go out to well over 265 people and we number some 60 as paying members of TSUG. It is active with the 4-H program across this state; three computer camps this summer allowed more than fifty 9 through 18 year olds to begin computing on the Timex TS1000 and take the computer home, too, to keep. It was the only users' group from the South to be represented at the Boston Computer Society's recent Timex-Sinclair Celebration. And it is probably the only group that benefits from being deadly honest about the strengths and limitations of the computers it supports.

MEETS ONCE A MONTH

TSUG meets on the first Sunday of each month in the auditorium of the Dreyfus Laboratory Building in the Research Triangle Park--in the shadow of giants such as IBM and DATA GENERAL. To get to our meeting place you turn onto Cornwallis Rd. from the I-40/Raleigh Durham Expressway (turn off by Burroughs Wellcome or come to Cornwallis from Davis Dr.). There are two little roads that lead into the Research Triangle Institute Complex; East I stitute Dr. and West Institute Dr., and RTI is located between Davis Dr. and Burroughs Wellcome, across from the Cornwallis entrance to IBM. The Camille Dreyfus Lab Building auditorium is located off of East Institute Drive. We meet at 2:00 pm and usually are there until well past 5:00 pm . Our meetings include all types of demonstrations, instruction and help.

Our meeting date for December is December 4th and in January we will have a small change since January 1st is the first Sunday of the month. In January we will meet January 8th along with the TI users' group, and we will hear a special presentation from Phil Kegelmeyer who is working on artificial intelligence at Stanford University.

FORTH NEWS BY DS

HAWG WILD SOFTWARE HAS A VERSION OF FORTH CALLED XFORTH FOR THE TS 1000. THIS VERSION IS ONE OF SEVERAL FOR THE TS, BUT BEING NEW AT THE FORTH GAME, I HAVEN'T SEEN THE OTHERS, NOR HAVE I EVER SEEN FORTH WORKING ON A BIGGER COMPUTER. SO THE REMARKS THAT FOLLOW ARE GENERALLY BORN FROM IGNORANCE AND CAN ONLY GIVE MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

TAKING THE ADVICE OF HAWG WILD'S VERY HELPFUL LEADER, GARY SMITH, I READ LEO BRODIE'S BOOK "STARTING FORTH," WHICH GIVES A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT FORTH IS AND HOW TO USE IT. THE FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF A FORTH PROGRAM ARE WORDS--MANY ARE PROVIDED WITH THE FORTH SYSTEM, THE OTHERS WILL HAVE BEEN DEFINED BY YOU--AS YOUR DICTONARY OF WORDS INCREASES YOUR EASE IN HANDLING THE PROGRAM DOES TOO. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU ARE WRITING A PROGRAM TO CONTROL A ROBOT, YOU MIGHT WRITE 45 ELBOW FLEX BUT IF YOU FIND YOU ARE CONSTANTLY USING THIS SEQUENCE YOU CAN DEFINE A NEW WORD AS FOLLOWS

: BEND 45 ELBOW FLEX ;

BOTH THE : AND THE ; ARE STANDARD FORTH WORDS, THE : MEANING, ROUGHLY, THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A DEFINITION, AND THE ; MEANS THIS IS THE END OF IT, START COMPILING. NOW, WHEN YOU ENTER BEND YOU PROGRAM WILL GO THRU THE SEQUENCE 45 ELBOW FLEX. NO LINE NUMBERS, NO GOSUBS--THE SIMPLICITY IS VERY APPEALING. BUT ALSO, BECAUSE YOU CA USE FORTH TO TALK ABOUT FORTH THE LANGUAGE SEEMS ENORMOUSLY POWERFUL TO ME AND WONDERFULLY SELF-REFERENTIAL. FOR INSTANCE, I WANTED TO STORE THE DEFINITION OF EVERY WORD I MADE. THAT IS, I NEEDED A WORD LIKE ; WHICH WOULD NOT ONLY SIGNAL THE END OF THE DEFINITION BUT WOULD ALSO STORE THE DEFINITION. I CALLED MY WORD H; AND, OF COURSE, ITS DEFINITION BEGAN : H; ...ETC... ;

I GUESS THIS IS THE KIND OF THING THAT MUST BE DONE IF YOU WANT AN EDITING PROGRAM, AND THIS BRINGS ME TO SOME NEGATIVE COMMENTS.

EVEN THE SIMPLEST TURTLE GRAPHICS IMPLEMENTATIONS HAVE EDITING FEATURES: YOU CAN LOOK AT YOUR DEFINITIONS, DELETE AND ADD, AND EXPEN VALUABLE RAM (AND TIME) BY LOADING IN ONLY YOUR WORDS THAT ARE PERTI NENT TO THE TASK AT HAND. IN FACT, BRODIE SAYS, "EVEN THOUGH DISK MEMORY IS NOT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR A FORTH SYSTEM, IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE FORTH WITHOUT IT." WELL TS OWNERS CAN, BUT FORTH WITH NO EDITOR IS REALLY CRIPPLED. IT'S LIKE BASIC WITHOUT LIST .

I HAVE HAD FUN WITH XFORTH USING IT TO PK AND LD MACHINE CODE INTO MY HUNTER BOARD, AND TO MOVE IT AROUND EASILY. THE FORTH WORD HEX ENABLES FORTH TO INPUT AND OUTPUT HEX RATHER THAN DECIMAL, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE WORD IS NOT ON THE LIST THAT COMES WITH XFORTH. ALSO A MEMORY MAP OF XFORTH WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL--THERE ARE K'S AND K'S OF BLANK RAM WHICH HAVE TO BE LOADED AT EACH START-UP. IF I KNEW WHERE THEY WERE, I COULD PUT THEM IN AFTER LOADING USING THE BASIC ROM MAKE-ROOM ROUTINE AT 099E. THIS WOULD SAVE A LOT OF TIME.

USING XFORTH, IN CONJUNCTION WITH BRODIE'S BOOK, HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE A VERY INSTRUCTIVE EXPERIENCE, AND I'M BEGINNING TO SEE HOW AN IDEAL FORTH SYSTEM MIGHT OPERATE. FROM TIME TO TIME, AS I LEARN MORE, I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT.

THE XFORTH CASSETTE FROM GARY SMITH IS $25 PLUS $1 PH. AS YOU KNOW HE ALSO WRITES AN OCCASIONAL NEWS-LETTER CALLED XFORTH XCHANGE. WRITE TO HIM FOR DETAILS.

I HAVE SEEN SEVERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

FORTH INTEREST GROUP (FIG)
P.O. BOX 1105
SAN CARLOS, CA 94070.

ALSO THERE IS FORTH, INC., FOUNDED BY THE INVENTOR OF FORTH:

2309 PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY
HERMOSA BEACH, CA 90254